



H.R. 1595 – Guam World War II Loyalty Recognition Act

Floor Situation

H.R. 1595 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Delegate Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU) on March 20, 2007. The bill was ordered to be reported from the Committee on Natural Resources, by voice vote, on May 2, 2007.

H.R. 1595 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on May 7, 2007.

Summary

H.R. 1595:

Recognizes the suffering of the residents of Guam as described by the Guam War Claims Commission, "the residents of Guam, on account of their United States nationality, suffered unspeakable harm as a result of the occupation of Guam by Imperial Japanese military forces during World War II, by being subjected to death, rape, severe personal injury, personal injury, forced labor, forced march, or internment."

Recognizes the "Loyalty of the Residents of Guam- The United States forever will be grateful to the residents of Guam for their steadfast loyalty to the United States of America, as demonstrated by the countless acts of courage they performed despite the threat of death or great bodily harm they faced at the hands of the Imperial Japanese military forces that occupied Guam during World War II."

Authorizes appropriations for victims and the survivors of victims, depending upon the severity of injuries suffered the awards can range from \$10,000-\$25,000. These acts may include rape, loss of limbs, dismemberment, forced labor, scaring, burns, forced marching or interment.

If there is a surviving spouse without any children they will receive all of the money. If there is a spouse and children, half will go to the spouse and the other half evenly divided between children. If there is no spouse, the payments will be divided among the parents and finally if there is a parent they will receive the award as a last effort. If no living spouse, children or parents are present then no award will be given.

The Foreign Settlement Commission will verify that these injuries were in fact suffered from being an American citizen in Guam during the time of invasion in WWII.

Also allows the Secretary of the Interior to establish a grant program for any organization or individual wishing to memorialize the acts committed on Guam during the occupation or honoring the loyalty of the Guam people in their commitment to supporting America, even when it meant death. Under this Act \$5 million will be made available for use until fiscal year 2012 in order to carry out this program.

Background

Guam ceded to the United States following the Spanish American War of 1898. A year later, in 1899, the U.S. formally purchased Guam and other Spanish-held territories for \$20 million. On December 10, 1941, Guam surrendered to the Japanese. During this time the U.S. Nationals on the island were subjected to harsh treatment by the Japanese. The Japanese even renamed the island 'Omiya Jima' or Great Shrine Island.

In 1944 America regained control of the island and set out to make right the crimes committed against its own people. In 1945, Congress passed the Guam Meritorious Claims Act (GMCA), which authorized the Secretary of the Navy to appoint a claims commission to adjudicate as well as settle war claims not in excess of \$5,000.

In 2002 PL 107-333 was signed by President Clinton on December 16, 2002. PL 107-333 established the Guam War Claims Review Commission (GWRC), which was tasked with reviewing how well the GMCA accomplished its original charter. The GWRC reported back to Congress and determined there was more to be done in Guam. The commission laid out several options to ensure the citizens of Guam were properly compensated. This legislation seeks to implement those recommendations and appropriate the necessary funds to do so.

Cost

“CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1595 would cost about \$130 million over the 2008-2012 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts. Enacting the legislation could increase revenues from civil and criminal penalties and direct spending of any collections, but CBO estimates that any amounts collected or spent would be negligible.” CBO Cost Estimate

Staff Contact

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